

McGULBIE, WILLIAM

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CONTEMPORARIES

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Abraham Lincoln's Contemporaries

William McCullough

Excerpts from newspapers and other
sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

WAR DEPARTMENT

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

IN REPLY
REFER TO

A.G.201

McCullough, William
(1-30-30)ORD

WASHINGTON

February 8, 1930.

• Mr. Harry E. Pratt,
1210 W. University Avenue,
Urbana, Illinois.

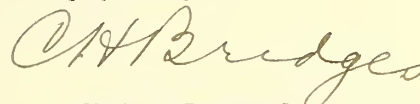
Dear Sir:

I have your letter of January 30, 1930, in which, referring to the case of Lieut. Col. William McCullough, 4th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, you ask whether it was necessary for a one armed man to obtain a permit to enter the service and from whom the permit could be obtained. It is stated in your letter that William McCullough had one arm and one eye.

Nothing has been found of record in my office to show that Lieut. Col. William McCullough who was killed in the battle near Coffeeville, Miss., December 5, 1862, had only one arm and one eye.

The records show that William McCullough was appointed senior major August 20, 1861, and was appointed lieut. colonel October 6, 1861, and that he was mustered into service as lieut. colonel 4th Illinois Volunteer Cavalry, October 12, 1861. Nothing is found of record to show that he was ever mustered into service as a major, nor is anything found of record to show specifically from whom he received his commission as senior major or as lieut. colonel. However, it is deemed proper to state that by an Act of Congress approved July 22, 1861 (12 Stat., 261) authority to appoint all commissioned officers of the Volunteer forces was vested in the Governors of the several states.

Very truly yours,

Major General,
The Adjutant General.By 

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1210 W. Univ. Ave.
Urbana, Ill. Feb. 12, 1930

Mr. Louis A. Warren
Editor: Lincoln Lore
Ft. Wayne, Ind.

Dear Mr. Warren:

I believe that I have most of the facts of interest on Mr. McCullough and his daughter Fanny. I am putting them all down and you can use any of it that is of interest to you.

William Mc Cullough, son of Peter and Levina Mc Cullough, was born Sept. 11, 1812 in Flemingsburg, Ky. Mc Cullough family moved to what is now Mc Lean Co., Ill. in 1826 and settled at Dry Grove. William worked on a farm, in 1832 enlisted as a private in Co. of Merritt Covel, and fought in Black Hawk War. Dec. 1833 he married Miss Mary Williams. In 1840 he lost his right arm in a threshing machine. Sheriff of Mc Lean Co. 1844-48. Circuit clerk, 1851 to the time he went to war. He was clerk of Judge David Davis's court during the special term in June 1857, when Lincoln was awarded his \$4800 fee from the Ill. Central RR.

The Transactions of the McLean County Hist. Soc. in their biographical sketch say: "When the war of the Rebellion broke out he was exempt from service by reason of having lost his right arm, the defective sight of one of his eyes, and his age, but he could not content himself at home when his country was in danger, and in August 1861, he obtained the permission of President Lincoln to be mustered in the service as Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fourth Illinois Cavalry. William Mc Cullough was the ideal cavalryman, a superb horseman, of martial appearance, a full resonant voice white hair and beard, a natural leader of men, a courage that feared no one; watchful, careful of his men, he soon became one of Gen. Grant's most trusted officers. He participated in the capture of Ft. Henry, Ft. Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, and was killed in an engagement at Coffeeville, Miss., Dec. 5, 1862. while covering the retreat of the Union forces." Vol. 1 p. 522.

William Mc Cullough had 8 children, four of whom grew to manhood and womanhood. Nannie, was the wife of Brig. Gen. William W. Orme Orme was a partner of Leonard Swett in the law firm in Bloomington of Swett & Orme. He was a favorite of Lincoln's and David Davis's. I have copies of many letters written by Davis to Orme during the war in which he shows their very close friendship. In a number of them written after the death of William Mc Cullough he says, "I have been and talked it over with Lincoln and he urges as I do that you resign." You now have the Mc Cullough family to take care of in addition to your own. Davis says Ward H. Lamson will advise you otherwise, but don't take his advice. Lincoln's note of Aug. 2, 1862; "General Halleck please see the bearer, Mr. Swett, who will tell you the truth only about Wm. W. Orme, whom I also know to be one of the most active, competent, and best men in the world-" The original note is in possession of daughter of Gen. Orme, Mrs E.R. Morgan of Bloomington, Ill.

Two sons of Mr. Mc Cullough served in the war. William A. in the 5th. Ill. Vol. Cavalry. and Howard M. in the 94th Ill. Vol. Inf.

The other daughter, the one addressed by Mr. Lincoln as Dear Fanny: was just out of her teens when her father was killed. She was at home in Bloomington with her mother, who was practically an invalid. She married Frank D. Orme, younger brother of William W. in 1866. She lived most of her life from then on in Washington, D.C. where her husband had a clerkship



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<http://archive.org/details/abrahamlincolnscwmlinc>

in the Land Office. For a time he was Judge David Davis's private secretary. Mrs Frank D. Orme died in 1920, Mr. Orme in 1903.

Here are some items that indicate the close friendship between Fanny Mc Cullough and Mr. Lincoln. They are from David Davis's letters to Ward Hill Lamon. I got the photostats of them from the Lamon Collection in the Huntington Library in Cal.

Lamon was in Washington and had hopes of being appointed Marshal of the District of Columbia.

"Fanny Mc Cullough is as sweet as ever. I have told her, that I thought if she wrote to Mr. Lincoln she could settle the matter in your behalf, without much trouble." Davis to Lamon, Mar. 24, 1861

"I mentioned to my friend Fanny Mc Cullough, that if she would write to Mr. Lincoln, that I thought she would be successful in the matter of the Marshalship. -She Laughed-" Davis to Lamon, Mar. 30, 1861

"Our mutual friend Fanny McCullough is well & as lovely as ever."
Davis to Lamon, May 6, 1861

Lamon's interest in Fanny can be explained. His first wife died in 1859 and he did not marry again until 1861, when he married Sally Logan the daughter of Stephen T. Logan of Springfield.

The original "Dear Fanny" letter is in the possession of Mrs D.C.Smith, 501 S. University, Normal, Ill. She is a niece of Fanny, and like Mrs E.R. Morgan, is a daughter of Brig. Gen. W.W.Orme.

I have reports from the Adjutant Gen. of Ill. and from the War Dept. and neither can verify the county history account that a special dispensation was necessary for Mr. Mc Cullough to enter the service. However it may be possible Pres. Lincoln gave it to him. He did make a brilliant record as I found out by examination of the War of the Rebellion Records. The Confederate report of the battle says he was 17 paces away when he refused to surrender and was immediately shot. Gen. Grant gave leave for an escort to bring the body home for burial.

Yours very truly,

Harry E. Pratt

PS I am enclosing a copy of David Davis's letter to Dear Fanny, also the War Dept. answer to my letter. Please return the latter when you are through with it. Mrs E.R.Morgan states that in battle Col. Mc Cullough carried the reins in his teeth.

H.E.P.

Copy of letter of David Davis
to Bernadine Orme - Mrs Dudley C. Smith

Morrison's 4th Street
Washington, D.C.
Dec. 21, 1862

My Dear Fanny-

You know that I love you dearly as I do my own children, and that I sympathise most earnestly and deeply in all the trials of your life.

Your dear father was one of my oldest most attached friends, ever true and devoted.

It has never been my fortune to have a friend truer, braver of more generous noble and manly impulses. This wicked rebellion has desolated many a household & cast a gloom over many communities, but no community was ever more shocked than ours was & no household was ever more affected. Would to God that I was at home now, so that I could be with you & care for you & convince you that while my life lasts I will be as true and devoted friend to you.

If I was at home I would try to sooth you & get you not to give way to your crushing sorrow.

You must not Dear Fanny, sink under this blow, crushing & terrible as it is.

Your duty to yourself, your family & your God requires that you should not give way wholly to this grievous affliction.

The heart will grieve. It is right, but it is wrong & unchristian to give way to despair. The Providence of God were designed to chasten our hearts but not to break them. Do I pray you, rouse yourself & consider that if life seems to have no charms for you yet it has duties which must be performed.

David Davis to Bernadine Orme

If you can feel that others are interested & benefit by what you do, then you have an object in life, & if I know that when you are convinced that the path of duty requires you to throw off your deep despair, you will unselfishly as you always have devote yourself to the happiness of others.

There are objects of life enough for you to become interested in, & let me beseech you in the spirit of the love & affection that I bear you to throw off your deep grief & devote yourself to the duties that are ever present before you. Give my love to your mother & Nannie. Tell them that I share with them their sorrow. I intend to write to Nannie soon. I have written to Mrs Davis who is in Masses. to write to you.

And now dear Fanny recognize me as your best friend who will protect you & cherish you always. I need not say that I shall be glad to hear from you. It may be a relief to yr mind to write me.

Yr friend

David Davis

Mich.

The Hastings Banner

114th Year Thursday, December 4, 1969 16 Pages—2 Sections NUMBER 34

EDITORIALS

by R.M.C.

Lieut. Col. William McCullough, riding with the vulnerable rear guard of his cavalry regiment, en route back from a sweep deep into Confederate territory to gain information for Grant's coming climactic Vicksburg Campaign, was killed in ambush shortly after sundown near Coffeeville, Miss. This was on Dec. 5, 1862—one hundred and seven years ago, almost to the day from the date of this edition.

It was a relatively obscure action, a routine affair, duplicated in scores of similar situations during the course of the Civil War, that were soon forgotten as the spotlight of history was focused on events of far greater significance.

It is probable, however, that the name, "Lieut. Col. McCullough" and the details of his heroic service, will live on in memory even though his military role was a very minor one in a violent, colorful and complex era. The reason for this is anchored in a human interest story that involved one of the great personages in American history—Abraham Lincoln.

* * *

The McCulloughs and the Lincolns had a bond of mutual respect and affection dating back to the Springfield years. In fact, President Lincoln, after the outbreak of the War, used his authority to permit William Mc-

(Continued on Page 4)

EDITORIAL

(Continued from Page One)

Cullough to enlist for military service despite physical handicaps that would be totally unacceptable today—loss of one arm and the vision of one eye.

Yet, despite these handicaps, McCullough made a splendid officer who had the complete confidence and respect of those who served with him. His record during the battles of Forts Henry-Donelson, Shiloh and Corinth was so outstanding that Gen. Grant chose him to head the important reconnaissance action into enemy territory—a mission that led to his death.

* * *

Fanny McCullough, the youthful daughter of the slain Lieut. Col., was so grief stricken at the news of her adored father's death, that her sanity was threatened. She remained locked in her room and for days did not eat nor sleep. No one of her friends or acquaintances had the power to penetrate her gloom and sorrow.

* * *

It was on Dec. 14 that President Lincoln learned of McCullough's death and of the grief-stricken condition of his daughter. Then on Dec. 23, he sent the young girl a personal letter written on one side of a sheet of lined note paper, 7¼ by 9¾ in size imprinted with the heading "Executive Mansion." This letter, classed by many critics as the finest letter of condolence ever written in the English language reads as follows:

Dear Fanny:

It is with deep grief that I learn of the death of your kind and brave father; and especially, that it is affecting your young heart beyond what is common in such cases. In this sad world of ours, sorrow comes to all; and, to the young, it comes with bittered agony, because it takes them un-awares. The older have learned ever to expect it. I am anxious to afford some alleviation of your present distress. Perfect relief is not possible, except with time. You can not now realize that you will

ever feel better. Is not this so? And yet it is a mistake. You are sure to be happy again. To know this, which is certainly true, will make you some less miserable now. I have had experience enough to know what I say; and you need only to believe it, to feel better at once. The memory of your dear Father, instead of an agony, will yet be a sad sweet feeling in your heart, of a purer and holier sort than you have ever known before. Please present my kind regards to your afflicted mother.

Your sincere friend,

A. Lincoln

Miss Fanny McCullough

* * *

The delay in sending the letter was undoubtedly caused by the fact that Mr. Lincoln gave to its composition the same deep thought and careful study he did to major state papers. Every word was carefully chosen, each sentence painstakingly constructed and the entire paragraph organized with the logic and precision of a top flight legal brief.

* * *

The message that this burdened President sent to his grief-stricken young friend was something more than a letter of sympathy.

As Carl Haverlin, a Lincoln student points out—"Though glowing with tender and heartfelt compassion it (the letter) was argued with brilliant legal clarity. After first associating their sorrows he led Fanny step by step away from herself and her despair to consideration of her mourning mother. It accomplished what her family and neighbors could not do—for she believed Mr. Lincoln."

* * *

With the help of this letter, the young Fanny McCullough did snap out of her deep despondency, lived the normal life of a young lady of her era, was married to Frank D. Orme—and until the time of her death in Washington, D.C. on March 4, 1920, is said to have kept this letter in a secret drawer of her desk in memory of the sincere friend who wrote it—a friend in whom she had complete trust and confidence.

* * *

So, because of the timeless quality of this brief letter that a harassed President took the time to compose and send to a deeply troubled young lady, the name "Fanny McCullough" has become a part of the Lincoln story—and along with it will ever be noted the bravery of her father whose death was the cause of the grief which prompted the letter to be written.

* * *

During a recent trip to Chicago, I had the pleasure of seeing the original of this famous letter in the "Library-Office" of Ralph G. Newman whose Abraham Lincoln Book Shop and Americana House are well known to students of American history and the much larger crop of history buffs as well.

The letter was carefully removed

from its temporary home in a fireproof safe and placed in my hands. When I learned the price—well to the upper limit of five figures—I nearly had the "shakes" and was relieved to see it safely back in storage again. But, in view of the quality and unique nature of this little document, the price would seem well within reason.

* * *

For the benefit of those who can't afford five-figure "pieces of paper" in our collections—and we probably outnumber the others several thousand to one—Mr. Newman has had produced a limited number of very well done facsimiles, almost as life-like, so to speak, as the original—and there is a warmth and feeling you get from handling a reproduction of this kind that is simply "not there" when it comes a printed page.

* * *

It is a remarkable coincidence that the McCullough letter should have been penned at the very time that Christians throughout the world were preparing for their annual Christmas Festival. The timeless quality of Lincoln's brief message of condolence rests not alone on its superb literary composition, but more especially on the fact that it reflected a depth of compassion and concern for human suffering exemplified so gloriously by the Christ, Himself. Probably no one in the world received a gift more appropriate to the spirit of the season than did young Fanny McCullough on or soon after that Christmas Day of 1862.

